



Refuge kiosks help orient the visiting public; USFWS/Stacey Hayden.

For More Information

Please visit Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on the Internet at: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/>

Service Contacts

Tina Chouinard
Natural Resource Planner, Area 1
Southeast Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tina_Chouinard@fws.gov
731/432 0981

Michael Johnson
Refuge Manager
Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Michael_Johnson@fws.gov
270/527 5770

Scott Simmons
Assistant Refuge Manager
Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Scott_Simmons@fws.gov
270/527 5770

Please send questions or comments to:

Tina Chouinard
Natural Resource Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
49 Plainsbrook Place
Jackson, TN 38305
Fax: 731/664 1566



A variety of wetland types each having unique values are found throughout the refuge such as this beaver pond; USFWS/Andy Eller.



Proposed Expansion for Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge



Clarks River in the fall; USFWS/Andy Eller.

We at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, seek to expand the acquisition boundary of Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge to improve access, enhance conservation effectiveness, and link the refuge with other Conservation lands in the Clarks River basin (Kaler Bottoms Wildlife Management Area).

We are working with the state of Kentucky and various public and private partners to realign the refuge boundary using the local road systems adjacent to the existing refuge and the area of interest along the west fork of the Clarks River to better define the expanded refuge boundary. This realignment will enhance access and improve wildlife management capabilities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages approximately 9,000 acres at Clark's River NWR. The original acquisition boundary, approved in 1998, consisting of 19,605 acres, was delineated using the most current information to conserve habitat and provide public recreation. After a decade of on-the-ground management, we have recognized the original boundary created barriers to maximizing the refuge's full capabilities for wildlife conservation and public recreation.

The goals of this refuge expansion proposal are to:

- make it easier for the public to hunt, fish, photograph wildlife, and learn about the natural world at the refuge

- add upland habitat that is crucial to wildlife within the floodplain
- protect more contiguous bottomland hardwood forest and aquatic habitats in the lower Clarks River watershed

The proposal will also:

- conserve additional lands critical to the management of refuge resources and Kentucky's wildlife resources
- improve fisheries and water quality by conserving aquatic habitats
- enhance populations of listed species or those proposed for listing
- provide high quality habitat for migratory birds — both game and non-game

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

- support the management of the forested and wetland habitats
- seek opportunities to restore habitats for wildlife; provide increased opportunity and high quality public use
- to protect cultural resources

The proposed expansion area includes about 40 river miles and adds approximately 34,000 acres to the existing acquisition boundary. This proposal is the first step which, if approved, will then be followed by purchasing lands within the expanded boundary only from willing sellers, as funding allows.

Basic Facts about the Proposal

The proposed expansion area was created focusing on road systems in Marshall, Graves, and McCracken counties. The wetland habitats of western Kentucky have tremendous wildlife diversity and wildlife management potential. Decades of competing land uses have caused a loss of bottomland hardwood habitats throughout the Southeastern United States. The State of Kentucky's Wildlife Action Plan identifies the western Kentucky region with more than 250 wildlife species in need of conservation efforts.

The proposed expansion also supports the goals and objectives of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Lower Tennessee-Cumberland Ecosystem team, the Gulf Coastal Plain and Ozark Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Strategic Habitat Conservation, and the overall mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. To this end, expanding the acquisition boundary would further the



White-tailed deer are among the more commonly observed refuge wildlife; USFWS/Scott Simmons.

refuge's mission to conserve, restore, and protect migratory birds, resident wildlife species, and threatened and endangered species such as the Indiana bat.



Many children, like Chandler Maddox, have caught their first fish on the refuge through educational programs and special events; USFWS/Stacey Hayden.

The state and federal government have parallel wildlife and habitat conservation goals in this area. This proposal helps achieve these goals through a combined effort.

Benefits to the public are increased access and opportunity for:

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Wildlife observation
- Wildlife photography
- Environmental education
- Environmental interpretation

Other wildlife related recreational activities may be approved as found compatible and appropriate.

The proposal seeks to meet both present and future land conservation and resource protection needs for the Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge in western Kentucky.

Conservation Potential

The proposal is tied to many of the goals and objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Key components of this mandated plan are to conserve additional lands critical to the management of refuge resources and conservation of Kentucky's wildlife resources. The conservation potential of this proposal includes, improving water quality through conservation of aquatic habitats; enhancing populations of species that may be threatened or endangered; supporting the management of forested and wetland habitats; providing increased opportunity and high quality public use, and to protect cultural resources.

The expansion will also provide habitat and promote management for a diversity of wildlife, including numerous migratory birds and resident game and non-game wildlife species. Additionally, benefits to aquatic wildlife and fisheries resources can be expected from the resulting improved water quality and wetland protection measures.

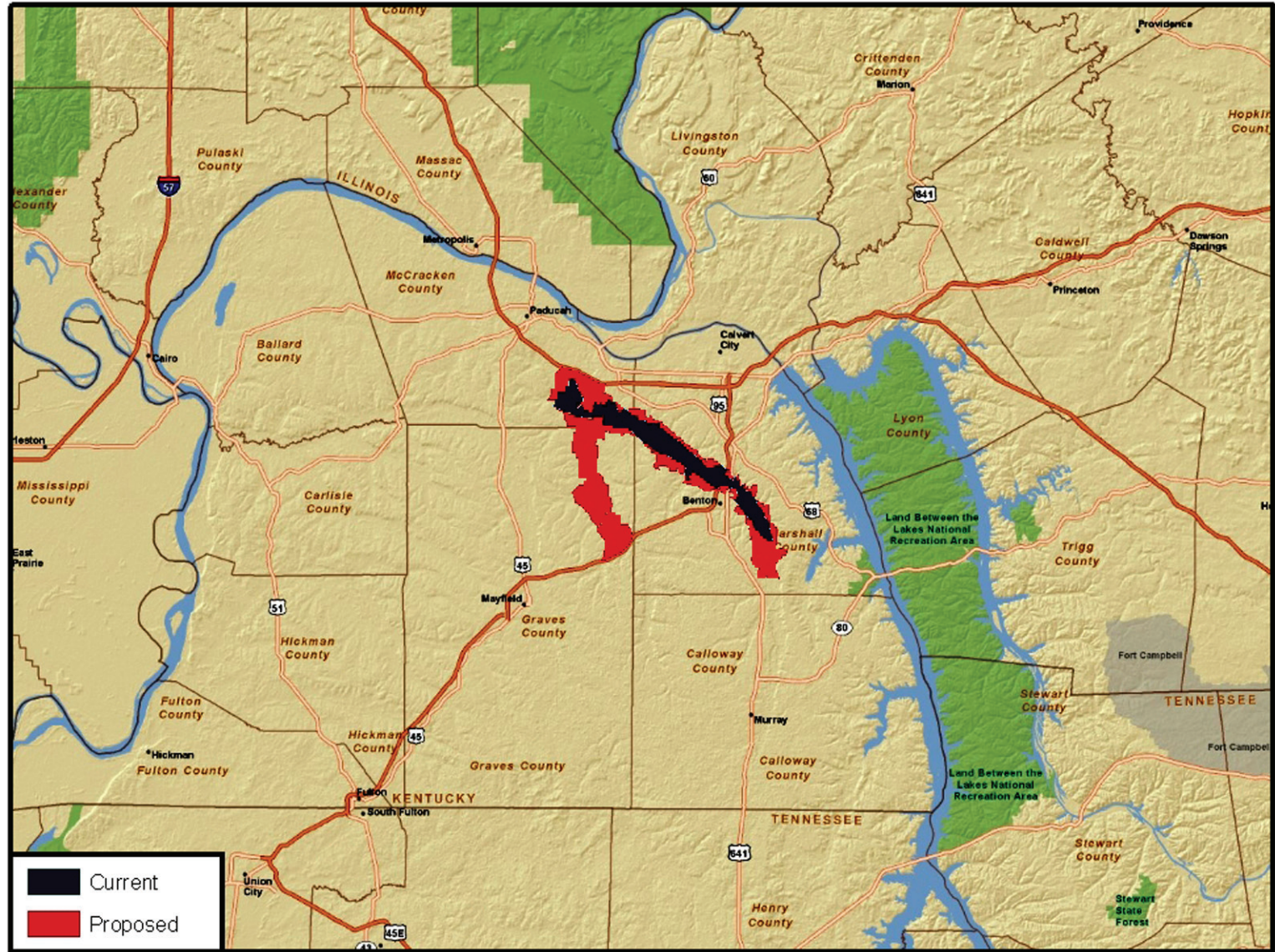
Southeastern bat species use the many natural cavities and wetland habitats in the bottomland hardwood forests on or near the refuge. The refuge also attracts thousands of migratory waterfowl including mallards, teal, pintail, shovelers, gadwall, and wood ducks during the winter.



Hunting is a popular recreation use on the refuge. Shown here are young hunters Alex Helm and Reese Johnson; USFWS/Michael Johnson.

How can we taxpayers afford this land in a time of tight budget?

If approved, the Service will draw funding for land acquisition from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund which are not derived from traditional tax revenues. Migratory Bird Conservation



Fund monies are collected from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps, and import duties on arms and ammunition.

Land and Water Conservation Fund monies are derived primarily from revenue collected from the sale of offshore oil leases. Funding from both of these sources is intended to aid in the conservation of land across the nation.

What is the time-line for achieving the proposal?

This is a long-term initiative that will take many years to complete. The timeline will be determined by the number of willing sellers that wish to sell their land to become part of the refuge, and the amount of funding the refuge receives to buy land.

The Fish and Wildlife Service will buy land from willing sellers. Permanent conservation easements will also be considered as a part of the land protection approach if desired by the landowner.

Partners:

This partnership landscape planning effort includes:

- Area landowners
- The public
- National Wildlife Refuge Association
- The Nature Conservancy
- Commonwealth of Kentucky
- Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior
- Southern Conservation Corporation
- Friends of Clarks River NWR
- Kentucky State Nature Preserves
- Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

Proposed Schedule

January 2012

Preliminary information-gathering meetings with government agencies and public officials, and key landowners within the proposed expansion area.

October 2011 - January 2012

Develop Draft Land Protection Plan (LPP) and incorporate into Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation for Public review

February - March 2012

Town hall meetings and public comment period

April - June 2012

Develop final plan (LPP) and associated NEPA documentation

July 2012

Decision by the Director of the Fish and
Wildlife Service